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SUBJECT: TDRA COMMISSIONERS AWKWARDLY PLEASED BY SPI AND BASHIR'S SPEECH

REF: A) KHARTOUM 1383
B) KHARTOUM 1216

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Land and Compensation Commissioners of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA) separately told poloff on November 13 that they were both pleasantly surprised by the results of the Sudan People's Initiative (SPI) and President Bashir's speech at the initiative's closing ceremony. Despite this optimism, the Compensation Commissioner said that he was not consulted nor previously informed of Bashir's announcement of \$40 million for collective compensation in the 2009 budget, and that he doubts that his commission will ever be entrusted with this money. Both of the Land and Compensation Commissioners stated that even if Bashir's promises go unfulfilled, the latter are symbolic and demonstrate the GoS's goodwill. The two officials updated poloff on the status of their commissions, requested U.S. funding for their efforts, and strongly criticized SLM/MM and their own TDRA. END SUMMARY.

SPI SURPRISINGLY POSITIVE...

¶2. (SBU) TDRA Compensation Committee Chairman Abulgasim Ahmed Abulgasim (see reftel A for biography) stated that both the SPI and President Bashir's speech at the closing session were surprisingly positive, and that this move will put more pressure on non-signatory rebels. TDRA Land Commissioner Adam Abdulrahman (a member of SLM/MM's Liberation Council and a member of the Mima tribe) was even more enthusiastic about the Sudan People's Initiative, which he labeled "a very, very good framework," and even quantified its contribution saying "this solves 60% of all of Darfur." (Note: Although enthusiastic about the SPI, Abdulrahman admitted that he had not yet had a chance to review the SPI's interpretation of land issues. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) Abdulrahman also asserted that the onus is now on Darfur's rebels to lay down their arms and participate in the peace process. According to Abdulrahman, Darfuri intellectuals who did not participate in the SPI were "astonished" at its results. Abdulrahman stated that the SPI proves that the GoS and President Bashir genuinely want to solve the Darfur crisis. Abdulrahman excused Bashir's noticeable omission of a Vice President position and the creation of one region for Darfur. "Bashir would need permission from the SPLM to create a new VP position or to unify Darfur, and so he did what he could," stated Abdulrahman.

. . . YET SKEPTICAL ABOUT SPI'S COMPENSATION PLAN

¶4. (SBU) Despite his positive impression of the SPI and Bashir's promise for collective compensation, Abulgasim expressed skepticism about the implementation of this plan. "Every year Bashir says that he will deliver money for compensation, and in the over two years of my commission, we have only received \$1.5 million," stated

Abulgasim. Abulgasim expressed doubt that the money promised by Bashir will ever make its way to the people of Darfur. Even if it does, "the GoS will use this money to buy people right before the 2009 elections." Abulgasim added that the GoS did not consult either him or anyone else from his commission before making the announcement at the SPI.

¶15. (SBU) Abulgasim reported that he will meet the Minister of Finance Awad Al-Jaz and State Minister of the Humanitarian Affairs Commission (and ICC indictee) Ahmed Haroun on November 16 to discuss compensation. Abulgasim predicted that the GoS will not deliver the money promised by Bashir to the Compensation Committee, but will instead attempt to use its own institutions and mechanisms to deliver it to the people of Darfur. The only way the GoS will allow the compensation commission to be involved is if it begs for the money and "bends to the will of the GoS," asserted Abulgasim. "In the end they will compel us to come to them for the money, as we cannot run an office without it," stated Abulgasim. Nonetheless, Abulgasim said that the \$40 million proposed by Bashir is nothing compared to the \$800 million that his commission proposed for comprehensive compensation during the next 10 years.

COMPENSATION COMMITTEE'S PREVIOUS PLANS

¶16. (SBU) Abulgasim said that he hopes that registration of IDPs in preparation for compensation can begin within the next month. He estimates that it will take several months and at least two million U.S. dollars to complete the registration of Darfur's IDPs, and that Bashir's announcement does not take into account the complexity of compensation. Although IDPs previously rejected the registration process involved with the census, Abulgasim stated that his commission's good relationship with the IDPs will allow this next

KHARTOUM 00001661 002 OF 002

form of registration to succeed. (Note: Following the meeting, Abulgasim gave poloff a tour of the Compensation Committee office, a three story building with roughly 60 employees. Approximately half of the offices were outfitted with computers, and many employees appeared to be sitting idle. End Note.)

LAND COMMISSION

¶17. (SBU) Abdulrahman reported that his Land Commission has tried to formulate a comprehensive and scientific approach to land use. The Land Commission has only now just completed the Terms of Reference (ToRS) for a comprehensive land use database and is seeking funding for conducting this study. This information will provide the basis for creating a mechanism for resolving disputes over land rights. According to Abdulrahman, only one percent of Darfur's land is registered in individual names, compared to 60 to 70% in other states. This creates an enormous challenge for his commission and the return of IDPs to their rightful lands. "How do you prove who owns what land when nothing has been documented, there has been mass displacement, and there are now new occupiers?" questioned Abdulrahman. Abdulrahman said that he is seeking approximately \$20 million USD for conducting this study, and that the World Bank, UK, and Netherlands have all appeared interested in funding this project.

CRITICIZING THE SLM/MM, TDRA, AND DPA

¶18. (SBU) Abulgasim appeared dismissive of the latest push to implement the DPA and the future role of Minni Minnawi in Darfur. In his view, the GoS rightfully fears that any money it gives to SLM/MM will end up in Chad. . Returning to earlier conversations, Abulgasim then accused the U.S. of favoring the Zaghawa tribe (e.g. "18 out of 21 people who were invited to the U.S. during Minnawi's last visit were Zaghawa.") Land commissioner Abdulrahman also strongly criticized SLM/MM and the very weak TDRA. "I will be very frank with you - the TDRA is not the way to solve Darfur, and we are more tribal, corrupt, and overall worse than the NCP," stated Abdulrahman. He added that , the NCP rightfully hesitated to fund the DRDF, as the money would be wasted and perceived by Darfuris as supporting only the Zaghawa tribe. TDRA institutions have competed for funding, wasted money, and had few successes in the last two years, stated Abdulrahman. Abdulrahman stated that SLM/MM and the

TDRA need better oversight, and said that the GoS should use national institutions, not the TDRA, to rebuild Darfur. According to Abdulrahman, the broad-based support for the Sudan People's Initiative has proven that the DPA is no longer the basis for any future negotiation.

COMMENT

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¶ 9. (SBU) Abulgasim's and Abdulrahman's positive interpretation of the SPI and Bashir's speech appeared somewhat incongruent, as both contacts reported that they were not consulted over its specific recommendations, both predicted that their institutions will be bypassed, and both expressed doubt that that Bashir's promises will ever be fulfilled. Nonetheless, these contacts remained optimistic that the SPI and Bashir's promises represent a start and a sincere desire by the GoS to solve the Darfur crisis. We do not share, at this point, such unfounded optimism. Both of these non-Zaghawa leaders also demonstrated that their disdain for the Zaghawa, the SLM/MM, and even their own TDRA is almost greater than that for the Government. This tribal tension represents a major challenge throughout Darfur and is something the Khartoum regime will always manipulate to its advantage. The two officials represent the latest of many contacts who have repeated recently that the U.S. has sided with the Zaghawa to the detriment of Darfur's other tribes. Septel will report non-signatory rebels' reactions to the SPI and President Bashir speech.

FERNANDEZ